

Utsukushii

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Summary: Seto said he believed it, but he never really could. It was just too silly. But the white-haired girl standing in his window seemed quite determined to show him he was wrong. Post-canon, vaguely Seto/Kisara.

Utsukushii

****Sorry that this New Year's fic is being posted ... almost at New Year's. My computer decided to get itself a virus today of all days, so I had to finish work on the story on my laptop. Which is also why many of your reviews have yet to receive replies. Sorry about that!****

****This is another holiday fic (my last for a little while), and is more description, emotion, contemplation than real plot. Take it as you will. Obviously, it's fairly short.****

****I will go ahead and say it. This is probably the closest to romance you're ever going to see me writing in this fandom, but â€¦ yeah. I will openly admit that there is a good chance this could be taken as Blueshipping (Seto/Kisara).****

****(COLLECTIVE GASP from anyone who reads my usual strictly "non-romance" work)****

****Yeah, yeah, I know, leave me be! Even with this, it's still just about as interpretable as everything in the original series/manga was. Priest Set and Kisara weren't in a _stated _romantic relationship, but many, many fans perceive their relationship as such (Takahashi-san's words on the matter were slightly vague, but _seemed _to hint at it). I write this on the view that our Kaiba Seto _is, _at least in most senses, Priest Set. Just with a different upbringing, slightly-different physical appearance, and some slight modifications in personality. Same soul, though.****

****If you're the type that likes to listen to music while you read, I highly recommend "Romantic Flight" from the How to Train Your Dragon soundtrack. Heck, I recommend it anyway! It's a beautiful song. Look it up. You'll see what I mean. I also recommend "Kisara" from the Japanese YuGiOh soundtrack, "Sound Duel 4." It's the song that played in the simply beautiful scene in the middle of episode 213. Honestly, I don't think I've ever seen so much relationship development done in one minute of screentime. ****

****Thanks so much for all the hits, favorites, and reviews you all have given me this year! I hope to have another year full of new stories! Have a wonderful new year, and I'll see you all in 2012!****

Utsukushii

It was darn cold.

Well, he wouldn't have used those exact words to describe it. But he found it easy to borrow from Mokuba's plain-and-simple way of putting things when he was just too tired out to think of his own words. And right now he was too tired to lift a finger and scratch his head. And even if he had had the energy, it was cold enough to convince him that all the muscles in his brain had frozen stiff.

So Mokuba's plain-and-simple wording would have to do.

One of the many things he had learned on his international business travels—and he had learned a lot of things on international business travels, one or two of which he would much rather forget—was that Japan was unusual in its lack of internal heating. Granted, even though Gouzabourou had emphasized acting tough and not complaining about something as trivial as temperature, Seto had seen fit to install a heater near Mokuba's bedroom half a year after they were on their own.

But he had kept his own room the same. Redecorated, yes, but he had not installed heating.

Usually, the insulation kept most of the warmth in, and Seto was not very sensitive to cold. But tonight, even as he lay underneath a pile of blankets he had stolen from one of the downstairs hall closets and wore his thickest pajamas and had made sure to close every window and door, he felt like he was about to lose several of his toes.

Seto snatched the blankets and pulled them further up so they touched his nose. He contemplated diving under them completely, but somehow that seemed undignified, and Kaiba Seto was not going to give up his dignity for something as silly as keeping his head warm.

Then again —

A gust of biting wind and the sound of shutters banging against the wall clattered through the room, and Seto just about fell out of his bed.

Oh, how glad he was that Gouzabourou could not see him now.

He pushed himself up, not caring when the cold nipped his bare neck and hands and cut through his clothes. He had no weapons, no way to

defend himself with anything but his deck of cards in the secured safe beside his bed. But he was fast and relatively strong from all the times he had had to defend Mokuba at the orphanage, a skill somehow kept all these years, and he wasn't about to let some idiotic burglar just walk into his room.

Seto focused on the open window to the side of his bed, and felt like smacking himself across the face.

Nothing.

Just an open window, and a lot of cold air.

Maybe he really _wasn't _getting enough sleep. He had always rolled his eyes at how insistent even Mokuba had been that he needed more rest, more time away from the office. He had to work to do. He was the CEO of a major international corporation. He didn't have time for rest. But if even one of his employees noticed him going off his head, he would likely end up with Mokuba sitting in his office every day just staring at him, waiting for him to take a break.

Mokuba was a good kid, well-behaved, and usually he agreed with what Seto told him. But he was certainly getting old enough to disagree.

Seto sighed and shook his head, and after a moment of contemplating the insane idea of just getting back under the covers and avoiding the cold as much as he could from there, he pushed the blankets away, slipped off the bed, and shuffled toward the window.

It was freezing. Truly so, now that he could feel the outside air without all the blankets in the house wrapped around him. He shivered, and cursed himself for his own weakness, but that curse was even weaker than his shivers and he barely recognized it in the back of his head. All he could really recognize was the cold and the sound of wind.

In the distance, he thought he heard something shoot up into the air and explode. He quirked both eyebrows and resisted the urge to put a hand to his forehead. Mokuba had mentioned it, hadn't he? And he should have noticed when all the employees seemed eager to leave their posts earlyâ€”though, honestly, they did that all the time.

Seto had never considered New Year's Eve a work holiday, and he wasn't going to start now. His employees worked when they were assigned, Monday through Saturday, eight to five or six or whenever he was paying them to stay. They earned their paycheck, and he wasn't going to pay them to take off an evening just so they could drink too much to kick off another year.

Besides, he knew of far too many other companies whose employees came in with hangovers on New Year's Day.

He was sure some of his employees still did, but they all made sure to stay out of his sight.

His fingers brushed the glass of the window, and it stung colder than the air. He shuddered again and reminded himself to tell Isono to buy him some thicker pajamas. The wind still gusted around him, and he

wondered in the back of his mind how the people setting off fireworks managed to stand outside long enough to set _anything _off without freezing to death.

He didn't know how the window had come undone. He never opened it, so he couldn't have just forgotten to lock it. But he would just have someone take a look at it tomorrow while he was at work. Right now, he was cold and he was tired, and he wanted to go to bed.

He reached to close the window and froze in place.

He was quite sure, at least in the first few seconds, that he was hallucinating. He started hearing memories of Mokuba's concerned mutters that if he got so little sleep on a regular basis he was going to end up seeing things, and his first instinct was to just shut the window, get back into bed, and write himself a memo to get Isono to look up a good psychiatrist. But the instant he looked out that window, the instant he saw it, he could not draw himself away from the strange and ethereal glow that grew closer and closer from the blackness of the late night sky

It might so easily have been the light twisting and turning in ways it normally never would. But then it would only have been the light, streaming in through the open window, and light did not frighten him. And he was not frightened by this. He couldn't be. He was Kaiba Seto. And nothing frightened him.

And yet his breath still caught somewhere deep within his throat, and the faint trembling he had suppressed from the cold returned, cold forgotten, the adrenaline in his veins forcing itself outward and shaking his body against his own will.

And he still stumbled back until he felt the back of his legs bump the edge of the bed, and his feet barely keep him up.

For the shape had ceased to be the morphing and shifting of the light, and had morphed itself into the distinct and shimmering outline of a person.

A girl.

A girl with long bright hair and eyes that might have glistened like the stars, had Seto not found metaphors ridiculous.

A girl, standing on the windowpane, who looked at him and smiled.

Seto breathed in, and again, his breath caught so far down he wondered if it had reached him at all.

"Who are you?"

He blinked, and he blinked again, and he hoped with all of his being that he had lost his mind, and in a moment Mokuba would come in with the doctors and a straitjacket and he would be taken away to be given shots and medicine and needles, and he would get better, and go back to running his company, and there would be no girl standing in his window.

He blinked one more time, but the girl was still there.

Seto put a hand to his head as his breathing came at last, ragged, desperate, uncertain, and he couldn't tell even as his vision cleared whether the girl reacted from his outburst of something he did not understand. Kaiba Seto did not have outbursts. He did not clutch his head like he had lost his mind. And yet Seto still did, standing so close to his bed that he might have tripped and fallen back on it and hidden under the sheets and called Pegasus in the morning to confirm that this was a cruel prank with holograms and mirrors.

He looked at the girl in the window, his breathing still ragged and shallow. The girl in the window looked back at him, and her features gradually came to shine out on their own even in her silhouetted image against the night sky. Eyes a gentle blue. Blue, familiar. Blue like something he knew but did not know and really did not want to know right now, when he still tried to tell himself none of this was real.

A gust of wind blew in, and the white hair that hung down to the girl's waist twisted around her, and she did not notice it, as if it had happened so many times it was like the heart he only hoped was beating in her chest. Her clothes were the most difficult to make out in the light and shadows of his own bedroom, and all he could decide was that it was a pale sort of dress. But Seto did not pay much attention to fashion unless it involved his work clothes, and he knew no other way to describe the "dress" than that.

Another ragged breath, and his eyebrows lowered as the bark that precedes a bite surfaced in his throat.

"What do you think you're doing here?" he spat. He thought the girl's eyebrows might have moved up in quiet surprise, or perhaps sadness, or even pity, but otherwise she did not move. He breathed. "How did you get up here? Who are you?"

The girl did not speak, and did not move from his windowpane. She balanced herself there, white hair twisting around her, the smile on her face gentle and permanent, like someone had painted it there with ink.

Gouzabourou would be yelling at him right now. Yelling at the boy, ten, eleven perhaps, who had forgotten to read the last chapter of the history of German warfare. Yelling at him to run to the phone and call security.

The phone was on his nightstand, on the other side of the bed. Seto was fast. In two seconds he could climb over his bed and snatch the phone, and his fingers had grown so practiced with the numbers that he would have security on the line in three. Unless the girl happened to be an Olympic gymnast, she couldn't get to the phone before him, and unless she was hiding a shotgun or a noose under all that hair, he could fight her off with ease.

Calling security sounded like a very good idea. It was a very good idea, and he was certain he would tell himself that until the end of time. Calling security would have been a very good idea.

But the girl did not move in his windowpane, and Seto did not take a step back toward his nightstand, and he did not dial the numbers on the phone, and he did not call security to remove the girl from his

room.

Blast, he was stupid.

Seto breathed in, and breathed out, and his breath trembled, but the breaths were full.

The girl smiled at him more than before.

And in a motion so fluid it was hard to make out, she took one arm from her side and reached out toward him from his spot by the bed.

He could hardly see the definition of her fingers as they glowed in the light of the moon. It struck him as the sort of thing Mokuba would have liked, just how he liked looking at fireworks when they had shows in Domino and he liked going to art museums to see new exhibits when Seto would much rather be at home with his work.

Maybe this girl should have gone to visit Mokuba instead.

Seto looked at her, and she didn't move. She didn't shift or look away. He didn't think he could even see her breathing. But Seto still breathed, and his eyes flicked from her eyes to her hand and back again.

He wanted more than anything to smack himself over the head when he felt one of his arms lift from his side as if of its own volition, but his other arm wouldn't allow that, either.

He stepped forward, his bare feet slipping across the carpet as if it was made of silk instead of some old material that smelled like leather Seto had been meaning to get replaced. His arm lifted more and more until it hovered in front of him like it had ceased to belong to him at all. Even his fingers moved, shifting, twitching, hesitating as if with their own thoughts.

Then his hand laid itself in her palm, and the warmth of the skin confirmed his new theory that perhaps this wasn't so much of a dream after all.

The girl's smile stretched from ear to ear.

Her fingers curled around his hand, and he felt the oddities of the rare sensation, half because the only person he ever let hold his hand was Mokuba, and Mokuba had long outgrown that habit, and half because even when Mokuba had done so, Seto had likely been otherwise occupied trying to protect him to realize how it felt.

He wasn't sure whether he liked it.

The girl pulled her arm back, gentle, and Seto stepped forward again as his arm followed her, again as if it was moving all on his own. Maybe once this was over he should get himself checked for some rare medical condition, if he could spare the time.

If his arm had come into the habit of making decisions on its own, he might end up having some issues getting work done using more than one hand.

But Seto forgot about his arm and widened his eyes when he looked behind the girl as the glow of the moonlight turned into a glow far brighter than the moon could ever give. He squinted, drawing his lips back from his teeth, but the girl just smiled. She pulled him forward, and he let her, and this time it was his feet that betrayed him instead of his arm.

His eyes focused on the light that burned into his sockets, glowing in a brilliant white with the faintest hint of blue, as if the girl herself had turned into light and shone there, if she hadn't been standing exactly where she was before, still holding his hand.

Then the light began to dim. Dimming, until he could only just make out the shape and the form, impossibly large and yet not so much that he couldn't tell what it was.

Coming nearer and nearer until it had turned to its side, its back near the window, its head peering through the window on the other end of the room with eyes he knew far too well to mistake, even if this really was all some crazy dream.

Seto breathed in, and his breath trembled as his eyes stared.

"Blue-Eyes æ|?"

The Blue-Eyes White Dragon opened its mouth as if to cry out a roar, but there was no sound, either because his ears had failed him or because there was none at all.

Seto no longer even thought about what he was letting himself do. Without a thought or a protest or even a word, he let the girl lead him with unlikely gentleness to step onto the sill of his window, cold in the night air, the wind biting his face and his skin but the girl's hand still warm, like the cold around her didn't exist at all.

He stood on the sill next to her, the metal biting into his sole, and instinct told him not to look down and see how far the ground was. He just looked forward, the girl's eyes matching his, glowing blue like the sky in the daylight, blue like the eyes of his beloved dragon.

His right mind returned for only a second, but it was long enough to wonder how all of this had managed to make him start using such cheesy metaphors.

Still holding his hand, her fingers and palm the only spot of warmth as the night air froze the rest of him so fast he wondered if icicles would grow from the ends of his hair. He swallowed and licked his chapped lips, and the girl took one step back as if to fall out into the air.

But she didn't. Her foot touched the glowing pale scales of the dragon, and she backed up, step by step, her feet perfectly balancing her weight as she moved higher and higher to the back of the Blue-Eyes.

And she pulled Seto with her, Seto hardly realizing when his own bare foot touched the scales, warm like the girl's hand, then his second

foot, his body balanced like hers. She pulled him onto the dragon's back, and he could see the head turning to look at him, its mouth still open as if it planned to roar. His eyes were still just as wide as before, his cheeks and arms and feet so cold he could barely feel them. He sat behind the girl when she straddled the Blue-Eyes like one would a horse—yet majestically, how could anyone else treat a Blue-Eyes with such respect?—feeling the scales beneath his knees through the fabric of his pants.

He turned his head, the ground staring back up at him from three stories below. The old dizziness of heights he had gotten over in his first week in the Kaiba mansion returned for a moment, and he shifted.

The girl took the hand she still held and wrapped that arm around her waist, warm like her hand, and his other arm followed on instinct, holding to her with a gentle grip he did not dare tighten.

She smiled still.

Then the wings he hadn't even noticed beat the air, and the Blue-Eyes White Dragon thrust up, past the third floor of the Kaiba mansion, past the door and up into the freezing wind of late December, up and up until the Kaiba mansion looked like the dollhouse Mokuba had once stopped to play with in a store before their parents died.

Kaiba gripped the girl's waist tighter and sucked in cold air that stung his lungs. He stared ahead of them as they thrust forward toward the moon and the stars and the clouds.

And though the millions of words raced through his head, he could not bring himself to speak.

Freezing wind. Weightless, yet weighing more than he ever had. No helicopter, no jet, no plane. There were no controls here. There were only beating wings at his sides, a head stretched out in front of him with its mouth wide open, though there was still no sound.

The echo of what might have been but was not a cry into the nothing filled his ears, then was gone.

The clouds surrounded them, like the steam in his shower but cold, brushing his face like the white hair that tickled his cheek. Each breath cold and wet, yet smoother than silk in his throat, breathing in, huffing out.

Then they burst forth through the top of the clouds, and the cold was gone.

All the warmth he had felt around the girl's waist, in the ends of her hair as they brushed along the edge of his face, spread to the rest of his body, and to the air around him, and to everything he could feel and all he could see. And as Seto blinked and breathed, his eyes focused.

And he saw how much he could see in this brand new world.

There were no clouds. The clouds glowed below them, reflecting the moonlight like each of the dragon's scales, and the dragon itself shone like a diamond with sapphires for eyes. Pale sapphire's, like

the girl's, and even though she faced away from him he knew she was still smiling. The clouds shifted like the waves of the sea, and above them, there were stars.

Hundreds of stars. Thousands of stars, each one shining so close and yet so far away in the blackness of the night sky. Untainted by the lights of the city below, unaffected by the world in which he lived his life. Not even blurred through the thick plexiglass of the window of a plane. Here, in the air where he knew he shouldn't have been able to breathe so easily, but he could. And where it should have been so cold his fingers would have frozen stiff, it was warm, but still his grip on the girl tightened, though the Blue-Eyes held its place hovering in the air.

Up and down, beating wings. And beauty. More beauty than Seto had known he could see.

The dragon shifted its wings, and they went gliding forward, the wind rushing in his face, but there was no chill and no sting.

Seto breathed, and the air was as smooth as water as it seeped into his lungs.

The Blue-Eyes flew on the wind itself, beating its wings like a small bird regardless of its size, the girl scarcely holding on now even as he hung onto her. She held her arms out to her sides, and as her hair brushed his face, he watched how the stars and the skin of her hands shone out just the same. He wondered, in the back of his estranged mind, if she was a star.

But she was alive, and stars were not.

It crossed his mind too briefly for him to notice that he should put a finger to her wrist to check for a pulse.

Seto jolted back as a whine streamed into the air from far below, like the scream of a child, shooting out into the air.

Then it burst, and he watched tiny sparks and light and color play out far ahead of him where the clouds parted above the city, shimmering and crackling like thousands of stars before fading and falling to the ground.

Another followed it, flaming and bursting, and another after that. The dragon didn't waver. It just flew forward, never getting too close, but staying close enough so Seto did not even need to turn his head to see the blues and the greens and reds and whites and golds coating the very air around them. He breathed out, and the breath was gentle and soft.

"Midnight," he murmured. They passed over a hole in the clouds, and he watched the lights shoot up from the ground, the artificial glow of the city dimming the stars. "The fireworks show."

Another firework burst behind them, and Seto looked at the girl, then at the dragon, then at the girl again.

He felt a half smirk twitch onto his face, and he wondered if she could see it even though she didn't look back.

"Happy New Year."

She tensed, just a little, as if in a vague sense of surprise. She turned her head only enough so she could meet his gaze, and her blue eyes could show the reflection of his own, and he could see in those eyes something he did not want to see.

And in an instant, those eyes grew soft, and her lips turned up into the gentlest hint of a smile, glowing and new.

Few things, after so many years of experiences far beyond the norm, caught Seto as new. Things were strange and ridiculous, but strange and ridiculous were commonplace whenever he got anywhere near Yuugi and the rest of his band of geeks, so strange and ridiculous he had long gotten used to. But never had he come across something he had heard described so many times before, and yet had never even remotely experienced for himself.

It was not because of some primitive beauty that Seto stared at her, and the muffled annoyance and disbelief and stoic lack of caring in his eyes melted so even he could feel it. He supposed by many standards she was beautiful. But Seto did not conform to many standards, and he lived for practical things, and not for beauty.

But beauty was not what made it so impossible to look away from the eyes that caught his. Eyes that teased him like the first sentence of a forgotten diary entry. The sort of thing Mokuba had kept on occasion when Gouzabourou was still alive, but always tore up out of frustration, and years later he would find one of the pieces of an entry and could make out only one sentence. And he would never understand what that sentence meant, and he would spend days, even weeks, searching the house for any clue as to the hidden piece of the past he could never unlock.

Her eyes were that diary entry. That piece, not even a sentence, not even a word. A glimpse of a single letter, a letter that screamed out its importance so loud it burned his ears, but a letter that laughed at him when he tried to reach for it, to make sense.

A letter he might have cursed himself for trying to reach, and yet now he could not bring himself to do.

He breathed in, and he breathed out, and the air around him was warm, and smelt of sand. New sand, and of stone buildings and food in a marketplace and the odd scent that came when children laughed even though laughter had no scent. And before his face, he could almost feel the brushing of strands of hair against his skin, his cheek, the tip of his nose, as the letter screamed to him and ran away, and he felt as if some part of his heart that had always been filled had been stabbed and drained of everything it held, so much that he wanted to scream out and hold his head and cry for something he did not know he had lost.

And all the time she smiled while that part inside him screamed, that little smile that fit her sparkling blue eyes and the waves of hair that shimmered in the moonlight like a thousand stars itself, better than anything else in the world.

Seto looked at her, and he felt the warmth soaking into his arms

which clutched her waist out of that remaining instinct of self-preservation, a familiar warmth that was not so familiar, and the brushing of strands of hair as the wind blew them against his face, and the smile on the girl's face turned up just a little bit more.

She turned forward again, and the dragon took a dive down through the clouds, the water vapor catching on his skin, and they began their slow descent.

He didn't know how long they had been flying. It might have been minutes. It might have been hours. In the distance he could hear the fireworks still bursting, but he could no longer see their glow. The city shimmered below him, nearer and nearer as the dragon dove.

It looped around, and Seto gripped the girl's waist a little tighter, and he thoughtâ€”he _almost _thoughtâ€”he heard a giggle from her lips.

But she did not speak when he looked at her, and when he opened his own mouth, he could make no words come out.

The Blue-Eyes soared not far above the roofs of the tallest buildings, and they passed by so fast he didn't have time to remember what they were. He wondered if any people stood on the ground and saw the glistening of white and blue in the sky, and if they thought, in their tired stupor, that they had just seen a stray firework, or perhaps just a trick of the light.

It might have been.

He did not notice when the mansion came into sight, his open window, the third floor, until the dragon lowered itself, wings flapping now to hover in the middle of the air. He looked to his side, and he saw his room, and it was just as it had looked when he left.

They had been underneath the clouds for what felt like a long time, and yet somehow, he was not cold.

The girl reached behind her and took his hand in hers, and this time, a little against his own will, he took a moment to appreciate the warmth.

He was hardly aware of stepping off of the dragon, feeling the scales under his bare feet, his knees slip away from where they had been for however long he had been in the air. There was no fear in him of the distance from the ground when the girl stepped with him to the windowsill, and the sill itself did not feel as cold metal should.

Seto wanted to look at her. He wanted to turn and look in her eyes.

He wanted to say something. He wanted to see if she would speak.

But when he turned his head, she was just smiling, as she had so many times before, her blue eyes stars all in themselves, her white hair glowing, and the memory he would not remember, a memory that was his and yet not his all at once, burning at his heart.

Though now it did not hurt quite so much.

She moved the hand that held his, and he followed her lead as she stayed on the sill and he stepped down onto the carpet of his room. Rough carpet, smelling of leather, the same he meant to change. Her hand slid away, the warm fingers brushing his like silk or raw emotion, an emotion he didn't think he could feel quite like this. Just a brush. Just an instant.

Seto turned around.

And there was nothing but an open window and clouds that had parted to show the stars, and the sound of bursting fireworks out in the sky.

Seto stood there for a few seconds more. He looked at his hands, and felt the warmth that was not his own lingering like the flow of blood beneath his skin. He looked where the dragon had been, or had been in his head, and he could still see the eyes in his head. Eyes that had looked into his in every duel, yet not so fierce.

He breathed in the air of his room that was no longer so stuffed up. He took two steps forward and slid the window closed.

The wind stopped, and Seto shook his head.

"Hallucinations," he muttered under his breath. "Definitely need to hire that psychiatrist."

He spared one more glance where there had once been a girl and a dragon in his mind. There was only air, only stars, only sky. Seto huffed and turned back where he had been, climbing into bed and pulling his covers over his body once again.

He nodded, and his cheek rubbed the pillow.

"Call the shrink tomorrow â€¦"

Yet for the rest of the night, not once did Seto feel clammy or cold, and when he opened his eyes to the sun shining into the room, the door bursting open to show Mokuba in his yellow pajamas shouting out a happy new year, he could almost see the faint form of a girl standing on his windowsill.

White hair shimmering, blue eyes gleaming, and the cry of a dragon echoing her silhouette in the light of a brand new day.

End
file.